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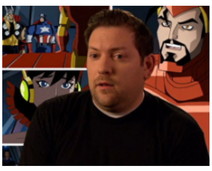
CHRIS YOST

The Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes Story Editor Christopher Yost talks to Marvel Animation Age about writing the first 13 episodes from the first season of the acclaimed animated series, touching upon his favorite moments and characters. The first 13 episodes of the *The Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes* animated series are now available on DVD, spread over two volume releases, from Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment.

MAA: First off, can you tell us why The Avengers were due for a cartoon and do you think that this series captures the spirit of what the Avengers are? Why?



Chris Yost: Spoiler Alert! There's an Avengers live action feature film hitting theaters in the summer of 2012. I think the thought was that an animated series would start getting younger kids geared up, like a gateway to the bigger Marvel movies. And to me, a way to get kids into the source material... comic books. There are things that the movies can't do, don't have the time to do that serial storytelling does. There's almost 50 years of comic stories waiting to be told, and to me this was the place to start telling it. We had the opportunity to cherry pick the best of the best from all of Marvel Comics, and it made working on the Avengers one of the best experiences I've had. Does the show capture the spirit of what the Avengers are? Audiences and fans will decide. But I wouldn't change a thing.

MAA: The series opened in a unique fashion with the micro-episodes. Why was this approach chosen and do you think it worked?

CY: I don't remember where the idea for the micro-episodes came from, it could well have been Supervising Producer Josh Fine. It wasn't me, but I thought it was great. It allowed us to give an introduction to each of the characters, to kind of lay out who they were and what they were all about *before* they became Avengers. To see who they were on their own so when you put them into a group dynamic, you already know them. Plus, we were able to introduce whole worlds and sub-plots, so by the time we got to the formal pilot, we could hit the ground running.

MAA: The team slowly develops over the course of the first thirteen episodes, included in these two DVD releases. How did this approach open up new story-telling opportunities as opposed with starting the show with the team already formed? Can you guess how you would have handled the series if you started it off with the team already formed from the get-go?

CY: It just felt more organic to grow the team as opposed to throwing it all in there the first episode. Josh and I wanted to start with the core five from the classic comics, have Hulk leave, find Cap... the classic comics have lasted because they did a great job with it. The heroes may be gods and monsters, but they feel like people. And the arguments, struggles, everything... that's the Marvel way. So we wanted to bring the comic books to the screen, we went about it the same way.

If we had to have done it with the whole team in episode one, I'm sure we would have found a way. We're professionals, man. But it might have been a three parter (laughs).

MAA: This series juggles a lot of history when it comes to the Avengers, specifically the rogue's gallery for each villain (Hulk and the Leader, Thor and Loki, etc.) Is it difficult to balance a specific character and his/her story and balance it with the overall story of the Avengers?

CY: It's difficult for me *not* to throw in all the history. I love it all, I want it all in there. We pull back as not to overwhelm people, or freak out people not familiar with the comics. We want anyone to be able to come into the show and have a good time. We'll throw in nods to the comics, if people get it -- great. But it's not something you have to get to enjoy the show, or even understand the show. That's the goal anyway.

MAA: Are there any moments in these first thirteen episodes that just perfectly encapsulate this series? Any moments where you can point to the screen and say "Yes! Now *that* is The Avengers!"

CY: I'd have to pick the end of "Breakout, Part 2," the formation of the original team. When they all come together to defeat Graviton, working together, each of them playing an important role, each of them crucial. That's the Avengers to me. Now in the second 13, there's a dozen or so of those moments (laughs).

MAA: As a semi-follow-up to the last question, what about some favorite moments of yours?

CY: In the first 13, probably Nick Fury and Captain America meeting for the first time. Pepper Potts interacting with Hulk and Thor. Wasp sticking her tongue out at Hulk. More the character interactions than anything. But for action, it's Thor and Wasp versus MODOC. Where else can you see that?!

MAA: You've worked on a host of different Marvel Animation projects over the years. What kind of challenges did this series bring as opposed to *Wolverine and The X-Men* or *X-Men: Evolution*, for example?

CY: This was the first show Josh and I worked on without Craig Kyle there overseeing things, and it was a little bit like working without a net. Craig is an idea machine, and has a way of seeing story solutions and turning things upside down to get at something new and exciting. But I think we rose to the challenge. The X-Men properties are also known for a little more angst than Avengers, so we were able to cut loose and just have fun. And honestly, after the mind-bending time-travel scenario of *Wolverine and The X-Men*, working on Avengers and it's straight-forward storyline was like a vacation. *Wolverine and The X-Men* was a tricky show to plot, Story Editor Greg Johnson, Craig and Josh deserve some kind of award for that, especially given how great the payoff was. Our only real goal outside of trying to be awesome on Avengers was making sure everyone had a moment to shine. It's easy to just focus on Iron Man, Cap, Hulk and Thor... but we wanted people to love Panther, Wasp, Hawkeye and Ant-Man just as much. We figured the big four were going to be okay.

MAA: Looking past the first thirteen episodes on these two DVD sets, and what has already aired, what can fans expect to see in upcoming episodes as we head toward the end of the season?

CY: The last seven episode of season one are where everything starts to pay off. Everything has been building to them... Hydra, AIM, Ultron, Masters of Evil... and the secret behind the Breakout that started everything.

MAA: As a semi-follow-up, *The Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes* incorporated some facets from the cancelled *Hulk: Gamma Corps* series. Is it true that this series will also incorporate aspects from the reportedly cancelled *Thor: The Animated Series*? Can we expect to see more Asgardian anarchy in the episodes to come?

CY: I didn't really think too much about *Hulk: Gamma Corps*, but the only stuff we used were the gamma chargers that the Leader gave his minions in the two-part "Gamma World" episodes. Maybe some of the designs, but I think Supervising Director Ciro Nieli, who worked on developing *Hulk: Gamma Corps* re-did most of them. The story lines had nothing to do with one another.

MAA: I know this is a longshot, but, as a fan, I have to ask - any chance for an X-23 cameo at some point?

CY: Nope. Sorry, dude.

MAA: Finally, tell us why we need to rush out and pick up *The Avengers: Earth's Mightiest Heroes* Volume One and Volume Two right now!

CY: Comic book fan? This show is everything you want in a Marvel Animated series, it's the Marvel Universe you know and love on the screen. Marvel movie fan? This is the Iron Man and Hulk you know, this is an introduction to Thor and Captain America that you're going to see this summer. Don't know anything about Marvel? This is the gateway. Get ready to dive in head first to the Marvel Universe. It's full of epic action, a lot of laughs, big damn heroes and villains... it's got it all!

Marvel Animation Age would like to thank Chris Yost for his participation in this Q & A!

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